

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 ARA-10 PM-05 NSC-05
SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 ACDA-07
L-03 /090 W

-----116305 191726Z /42

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9996

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USUN NEW YORK 6052

S E C R E T MOSCOW SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 10375

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PDEV, UR, UK, US, RH

SUBJECT: SOVIET POLICY IN RHODESIA

REF: LUSAKA 1873

SUMMARY: MOSCOW PROBABLY CALCULATES ITS INTERESTS IN
RHODESIA ARE SERVED BY A BREAKDOWN OF ANGLO-U.S. EFFORTS

TO ACHIEVE A SETTLEMENT AND THE GROWING FRUSTRATION OF
NATIONALISTS AND FRONT-LINE STATES OVER NEGOTIATIONS WITH
THE SMITH GOVERNMENT. SOVIET OBJECTIVES AND TACTICS FLOW
FROM THE FACT THAT MOSCOW HAS FEW INTERESTS -- AND NO REAL
RESPONSIBILITIES --IN SOUTHERN AFRICA TO DEFEND AND SEES A
FURTHER DETERIORATION OF THE SITUATION THERE AS THE BEST
WAY TO EXPAND ITS ROLE AND INFLUENCE IN THE AREA. END SUMMARY.

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1. EMBASSY APPRECIATES THE REPORT OF AMBASSADOR
SOLODOVNIKOV'S COMMENTS AND EMBASSY LUSAKA'S VIEWS
CONTAINED REFTEL. WE ARE IMPRESSED WITH THE ARGUMENTS
AGAINST ASSOCIATING TOO CLOSELY WITH ZAPU AND AGAINST
FUELING THE FLAMES OF RACIAL WAR IN RHODESIA, ALTHOUGH
WE ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO EVALUATE TRIBAL CONSIDERA-
TIONS. HENCE, WE WILL RESTRICT OUR COMMENTS TO OUR

PERCEPTION OF SOVIET VIEWS AND POLICIES. WE CONCUR THAT ACONSTRUCTIVE SOVIET APPROACH WOULD LEAD TO THEIR SUPPORT FOR POLICIES SUCH AS THOSE DESCRIBED INREFTEL. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT SOVIET PURSUIT OF SHORT-TERM GAINS IN RHODESIAN SITUATION REFLECTS A DIFFERENT PERCEPTION OF THEIR INTERESTS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA.

2. ALTHOUGH SOME SOVIET PARTICIPANTS IN RECENT DARTMOUTH CONFERENCE TOLD U.S. COUNTERPARTS THAT USSR HAD GAINED NO PROFIT IN ANGOLA AND WANTED TO GET CUBANS OUT, WE WONDER WHETHER THE SOVIET ASSESSMENT OF THE ANGOLAN SITUATION IS AS GLOOMY AS SUGGESTED IN REFTEL. THE SITUATION IS FAR FROM STABLE, BUT IN OUR VIEW THE SOVIETS PROBABLY FEEL THAT THEY HAVE ALREADY GAINED AN INEXPENSIVE VICTORY OVER THE WEST AND THAT THE RADICALISM OF CURRENT REGIME GENERALLY SERVES SOVIET INTERESTS. THE ECONOMIC COST OF ANGOLA IS ALMOST CERTAINLY VIEWED AS BEARABLE, GIVEN THE CURRENT POLITICAL VALUE OF THE NETO REGIME TO THE SOVIETS. ALSO IT IS NOT CLEAR TO US THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE LOST ALL THAT MUCH AS A RESULT OF THE ZAIRE INVASION. THERE ARE SIGNS THAT THE SOVIETS AND MOBUTU ARE TENTATIVELY CONSIDERING POSSIBILITY OF A MODUS VIVENDI, IF NOT A TRUE RAPPROACHEMENT (KINSHASA 6248). IN SHORT, WE DETECT NO EVIDENCE THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THEY HAVE SUFFERED FROM THEIR SUPPORT OF NETO
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AND THEY SEEM TO BELIEVE THAT ANY LOSSES OVER THE ZAIRE INVASION WILL BE MINOR AND SHORT-LIVED.

3. FOR MOSCOW SOMEWHAT SIMILAR CALCULATIONS PROBABLY APPLY TO RHODESIA AS DID IN ANGOLA. MOSCOW IS NOT ENCUMBERED BY DIVERSE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AND CAN PURSUE A NARROWLY ANTI-WESTERN, OPPORTUNISTIC POLICY. NO SOVIET POLICY OBJECTIVE IN AFRICA WOULD BE JEOPARDIZED BY THE FINAL COLLAPSE OF ANGLO-U.S. EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT AND WE SEE LITTLE OR NO SOVIET SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR ASSISTING ONE. RATHER, THE SOVIETS APPEAR TO EXPECT TO PLAY A GREATER ROLE AND TO EXERT GREATER INFLUENCE THE LONGER A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT IS DELAYED. IN A SENSE THE SOVIETS ARE POSITIONED IN SOUTHERN AFRICA SOMEWHAT AS THEY WERE TWENTY YEARS AGO IN THE MIDDLE EAST, ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING AND MANEUVERING TO GET IN. IN THE MIDDLE EAST THEY SUCCESSFULLY PLAYED WITH THE RADICAL ARABSTATES TO OPEN A ROLE FOR THEMSELVES IN THE AREA. THE CONSISTENCY OF SOVIET POLICY CONSIDERATIONS IS SUCH THAT WE SHOULD EXPECT THEM TO TRY TO PLAY A

SIMILAR GAME IN SOUTHERN AFRICA TODAY, WITH
THE CAVEAT THAT CONDITIONS ARE DIFFERENT THERE AND
THAT THEY WILL HAVE TO ADJUST THEIR TACTICS ACCORDINGLY.

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4. WE AGREE WITH REFTTEL THAT MOSCOW HAS NO INTEREST
IN "UNINHIBITED RACIAL WARFARE" SINCE, AS WE UNDER-
STAND THE TERM, THIS COULD LEAD TO A POLITICAL SITUA-
TION OVER WHICH THEY (AS OTHER WHITE OUTSIDERS) HAD
LITTLE OR NO CONTROL BUT IN WHICH NON-WHITE CHINA
COULD HOPE TO GAIN A FOOTHOLD. RATHER, MOSCOW
APPEARS TO HOPE THAT THE GROWTH OF "ANTI-IMPERIALIST"
GUERRILLA WARFARE, THE FAILURE OF NEGOTIATIONS AND
THE DEEPENDING FRUSTRATIONS OF THE FRONT-LINE STATES
WILL OCCASION AN INCREASING NEED FOR SOVIET
MILITARY AID AND LEAD TO A CONSEQUENT GROWTH OF
SOVIET POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL INFLUENCE. WE
RECOGNIZE THAT THE USSR NOW HAS ONLY VERY LIMITED
INFLUENCE AMONG THE NATIONALISTS, BUT WE SUSPECT THAT
SOVIETS CALCULATE THAT THE LONGER A NEGOTIATED
SETTLEMENT IS DELAYED THE GREATER THEIR INFLUENCE
WILL GROW.

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5. WE NOTE IN REFTTEL THAT THE YUGOSLAV AMBASSADOR IS FLOATING THE IDEA OF A SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN NEGOTIATIONS IN ORDER TO INDUCE MORE SOVIET SUPPORT FOR A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION. THUS FAR WE HAVE SEEN NO SOLID EVIDENCE OF SOVIET INTEREST IN A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION, BUT MUCH SOVIET INTEREST IN LEGITIMIZING THEIR ROLE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. MOSCOW WILL CERTAINLY NOT AGREE TO JOIN ANGLO-U.S. SPONSORED NEGOTIATIONS AT THIS POINT SINCE IT WOULD UNDERCUT THEIR LINE THAT VIOLENT STRUGGLE IS NECESSARY. HOWEVER, THEY WOULD WELCOME EFFORTS TO GET THEM INVOLVED SINCE THIS WOULD GIVE LEGITIMACY TO A ROLE FOR THEM IN AN AREA WHERE HERETOFORE THEY HAVE HAD NONE. FOR THIS REASON WE SEE NO U.S. INTEREST IN DRAWING THE USSR INTO THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS AS LONG AS THEY SPURN THE SOLUTION IT IS DESIGNED TO BRING ABOUT.

6. FINALLY, WE THINK THAT AS THE SOVIETS PURSUE THEIR POLICY IN THE RHODESIAN SITUATION THEY WILL BE CAREFUL, AT LEAST INITIALLY, NOT TO GET OUT IN FRONT WHERE THEY WILL BE THE MAIN TARGET OF ANY OF THE INVOLVED FACTIONS. THEY HAVE BEEN BURNED BEFORE IN AFRICA, AND IF ANGOLA IS AN INDICATION, THEY LEARNED SOME LESSONS FROM THEIR EARLIER EXPERIENCES. ALSO, THE RECENT PODGORNYY TRIP SHOULD HAVE GIVEN THEM AN EXTRA INDICATION OF THE LIMITS TO PUSHING THE FRONT-LINE STATES AND NATIONALIST FACTIONS. IT IS THIS PERSPECTIVE, WE BELIEVE, THAT WILL GOVERN THEIR ARMS POLICIES IN THE REGION. FOR THE TIME BEING, THEREFORE, THE SOVIETS WILL BE CAUTIOUS BUT IF THE SITUATION SHOULD RADICALIZE THEY WILL BE THERE TO PROVIDE THE ARMS AND TO COLLECT THE INFLUENCE.

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Message Attributes

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